

**SPEECH BY PARTICK DEVEDJIAN**  
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**FIRST WORLD BUSINESS DISTRICTS SUMMIT**  
**FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

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Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

It is a great honour for me to speak at the opening of this first World Summit .

EPAD, the public institution with responsibility for developing this business district , can be proud of having taken this initiative.

The Hauts-de-Seine "département" that is home to La Défense, can also consider itself fortunate .

In fact, this summit is perfectly in line with our country's current policy as, perhaps you are aware, we have just held an Environmental summit known as the " Grenelle de l'environnement.

Our President of the Republic wants to make France a model in terms of sustainable development.

And La Défense could be the spearhead for this ambition .

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I am happy to see so many of you here today. The fact that you have travelled from the four corners of the world is already a measure of this summit's success.

The majority of major business districts , 21 in fact, have answered the call and at very short notice.

Short notice that explains the absence of the United States .

I would like to salute all the cities present among us today and who are too numerous to be mentioned individually.

I would simply like to send a special message to China for the timeliness and the quality of its participation, as we have four Chinese delegations among us, representing Shanghai, Beijing, Shenzhen, in the person of its Member of Parliament and Mayor, and Shenyang with its Deputy Mayor .

In the same way, for the Moroccan cities of Rabat and Casablanca, I extend greetings to their Mayors who are also here with us today.

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I am sure that we are not really measuring the historical importance of this first meeting .

I am convinced that it marks the beginning of a new era .

## SPEECH – PATRICK DEVEDJIAN

10 years, 20 years, 30 years from now, the commemoration of this "first" will create a lot more noise than it is doing today.

Naturally, I am talking about media noise.

Then the media noise will mean that we will have drastically cut our environmental pollution, starting with that caused by atmospheric pollution, by the unfettered use of raw materials and fossils and by poor urban development.

Welcome to you all, presenters, spectators, accompanying personnel, whether official or otherwise.

Welcome to La Défense, welcome to France.

I am led to believe that most of you plan to extend this stay with a weekend in Paris.

I invite you to do so for two reasons.

Firstly, because it is one of the world's finest cities.

Secondly, because you will have the opportunity to extend the time spent considering the issues addressed during the forthcoming two days.

When you leave this room, I invite you to go to the esplanade and consider the view that crosses it, extending in one direction towards the centre of Paris, and in the other direction, through the Arche de La Défense, towards a never-ending horizon.

To the East, your gaze extends right into the heart of the capital and, in the distance, you can make out the Arc de Triomphe reigning over the centre of the Place de l'Etoile.

This extraordinary view will enable you to visualise the change in our mental landscape.

In fact, one could say that with this view, the Cartesian spirit that characterises the French, the geometrical spirit, is embodied in this landscape.

In fact, what we call the "historical axis" was actually first laid out in 1640 by Le Nôtre, the famous creator of the gardens at Versailles.

This structural axis crossing Paris from East to West, from the Palais des Tuileries to the La Grande Arche de La Défense, we could also call the "axis of progress".

From the gardens of Les Tuileries to Avenue de la Grande Armée, the landscape shows us the evolution of a civilisation displaying its military might.

During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, by crossing La Seine river a new challenge appeared with La Défense: economic might.

For a long time, it was the privilege of the West to impose its models just about everywhere in the world.

But today the watchword is globalisation, and with it, planetary rebalancing.

India and China are now the motors of world growth.

We are now facing the other direction of the "axis of progress", beyond La Grande Arche, towards the Orient.

There where the sun ends its daily travel, where the ancients believed the world ends.

For us, today, it is the beginning of another world.

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The mental landscape of the 21<sup>st</sup> century should gravitate towards universality.

It remains to be built. And we know that we will not design it on our own.  
The Orient, and more broadly, the rest of the world have a lot to tell us. A lot to teach us.

Doubtless, we are going to look to you for the basics of the solutions that will enable the relationship between mankind and the universe that surrounds it to be restored.

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The first conferences in Rio, Kyoto and Johannesburg raised salutary awareness.

Francis Bacon, the English philosopher and a contemporary of Descartes, said: "Nature, to be controlled, must be obeyed".

A self-evident statement so often forgotten since that time.

Today, irrespective of your scientific opinions, we all need to abide by one watchword:

There is an urgency to be cautious.

We are all well aware of this. Your presence here bears witness to that.

However, to imagine ecology as a political doctrine is not compatible with the universally-accepted market economy system.

Regrettably, it is a somewhat unrealistic utopia.

In its fundamentalist excesses, this doctrine goes as far as considering mankind as the predator of predators.

Our motivation is diametrically opposed to this notion.

The human being has to be at the heart of sustainable development.

Business districts are symbols of the capitalist model, based on the market economy.

They are also the focus of the most virulent criticism of our systems.

They are, in some way, the showcase of our successes.

We owe it to ourselves, vis-à-vis all the people on the planet, to set the example for the sustainable development that we advocate.

As a venue for exchange *par excellence*, business districts must go beyond commercial and financial strategies to place themselves at the vanguard of eco-compatible development.

This is the essence of the challenge of the Summit that opens today:

To define common objectives, promote reasonable consumption modes, compatible with sustainable development.

It is with this in mind that we have shared in the regeneration of La Défense. By exceeding our own High Environmental Quality standards we have obtained serious commitments from our partners to work in accordance with American (LEED) or British (BREEAM) standards.

At the same time, back in November, in preparation for this Summit and following a series of meetings, and Round Table sessions, a Scientific Committee drafted and validated a Charter to serve as the main thread of this Summit.

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Once comments on the Charter have been taken into account, we should be able to use it as a common benchmark.

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We all have strong points. So much experience to share.

Some of which are destined to serve as examples for use elsewhere .

I am thinking about the mixed towers in Vancouver, where office workers and households live side by side.

Nearer to us, in the South, I am thinking of Barcelona and its Agbar tower with its revolutionary pneumatic waste treatment system that enables a district to completely manage its waste disposal .

With more determination than us, Barcelona has installed a gigantic solar panel on the coast.

I am also thinking of the Swiss Re tower built by Norman Foster in London and that has astonished us by its energy performance and its daring architecture.

It is from these achievements that together we will get close to the zero consumption target, and perhaps even one day design an energy positive tower block .

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Repositioning the human being at the centre of business district planning decisions, this is what characterises our project at La Défense.

Until now, business districts have been dreamt up with only the aspects of urban planning and architectural constraints in mind.

However, as we all know, these districts will become much -appreciated living spaces from the point when human beings can satisfy their needs by moving easily from one phase to another, with simple transitions and without any brutal changes .

This is the gamble to which we are committing ourselves here at La Défense, by combining the concepts developed by Al Gore and Stern.

Currently, 85% of employees at La Défense travel to their workplace by public transport .

But we are continuing to devise alternative solutions, notably in terms of freight movements , by looking to railways or waterways.

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Encouraging exchanges by placing emphasis on technologies that are the most respectful of the environment and deploying planning strategies that focus on savings in terms of space and natural resources are among the issues and solutions that incite us to come together as a network .

95% of the presenters who are going to contribute to these two days have come to share with us their experience acquired in other countries .

80 speakers, from the five continents, representatives of cities and bodies managing business districts, specialists in construction, transportation, climatology, water management ...architects, promoters, managers, researchers, as well as philosophers and sociologists are going to enable us to draw up a status report on our knowledge in this domain.

We will also hear from Joseph Stiglitz, professor at the University of Columbia and Nobel Prize winner for economics.

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## SPEECH – PATRICK DEVEDJIAN

We are expecting a lot from this meeting of minds .

There has to be a "pre" and "post" Summit .

We will have succeeded with our first attempt to address the issues if we finally manage to turn a page.

You have to leave with the belief that we can longer build tower blocks as we did in 2007.

Beyond the questions debated during these sessions, here at La Défense, I would like to see the birth of an ideas laboratory and, why not in future, the setting up of an incubator where we could experiment with new approaches.

I want to make La Défense a centre for research into sustainable development .

We have the means to achieve this . The Hauts-de-Seine is a "département" particularly rich in talent and cutting-edge enterprises.

This would be a project in keeping with the Greater Paris concept .

Ideas for cooperation are already under way.

London and the ICLEI association in Fribourg have already expressed their wish to help us in building an international network of business districts .

And naturally, we will welcome all your proposals with keen interest .

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We are at the beginning of a spiral that can, if we want it hard enough, lead to very considerable changes in environmental policies .

The extent of these changes matches the economic might that we represent.

So, before leaving you to devote yourselves to these fascinating debates, I would like to thank you for coming this far to write with us the first pages in the world history of business district sustainable development.

Thank you.